



US ARMY 20TH SUPPORT COMMAND

Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and High Yield Explosives

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20th Support Command turns one-year old

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

22 August 2005

ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, Md. – Though the 20th Support Command (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and High Yield Explosives) won't celebrate its first birthday until mid-October, it has undergone a number of changes over the last year.

When the CBRNE headquarters was activated, members who made up the unit knew there was a lot of work to do and many changes to adapt to before they would reach what the Army considered full operational capability. Many didn't realize what those changes would encompass before the year was done.

The 20th SUPCOM (CBRNE) was activated last October 16th as a major subordinate command of the U.S. Army Forces Command. The first item on the commander's agenda was to develop a plan to get the unit from where it was to full operational capability.

"With the shortness of resources and personnel at the start of our initial activation, we felt like the commander needed additional and focused visibility on tasks needed to activate our new subordinate organizations," said Col. Gene (Ed) King, former deputy commander of the 20th Support Command (CBRNE) and director of the integrated process action team, called the Tiger Team.

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"This process really validated the concept of Department of the Army civilians, active duty Soldiers, reserve component Soldiers, and contractors working together as one team to give our new organizations a central repository for data, assign areas of responsibilities, and to meet weekly by video teleconference to iron out tasks and receive guidance from our command leadership."

Like other parts of the Army, there was a shortage of people. The headquarters is staffed by Army Soldiers and civilians. A hiring freeze was placed on the unit that restricted the hiring of civilians; the war on terrorism had an impact on the number of Soldiers arriving at the unit.

The headquarters had little more than one-third of its authorized staff when it was activated. Increasing personnel strength was vital to enabling the headquarters to reach its goals of providing an operational headquarters to command and control CBRNE assets and operations; serving as the Army force provider of specialized CBRNE forces in support of combatant and joint force commanders, and other federal and state agencies; and becoming a center of excellence for CBRNE initiatives.

"In less than one year the headquarters has seen tremendous growth both in personnel and infrastructure," said Dave Parker, G-1 human resources manager. "In spite of substantial challenges we have successfully established and fostered a high level of esprit de corps and basic teamwork throughout the unit."

When the command was activated it was designed to provide a deployable headquarters. Equipment authorized to a unit expected to deploy is significantly

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different than a headquarters that remains in the rear and just deploys subordinate units. Filling those equipment requirements, and providing the ability to sustain its people and equipment during a deployment requires coordination and planning by the logistics personnel.

“Over the last year the G-4 focused and tailored its capability to fit and fix the immediate support requirements caused by unit activations and deactivations,” said Gary Allen, G-4 logistics management specialist. “The 20th Support Command (CBRNE) transitioned from tables of distribution and allowances, or TDA unit, to a modification table of organization and equipment, or MTOE multi-component unit,” he added.

“Our section initiates stationing studies, calculates space requirements, analyzes installation information, develops cost analysis for courses of actions, conducts decision briefs, acquires both commercial off-the-shelf and standard military equipment and supplies, identifies standard Army information management system requirements, and establishes property books for accountability,” Allen explained.

“Our goal is to acquire all the equipment authorized and needed for our newly activating units, closely coordinating our actions with the Forces Command G-4 and the Department of the Army headquarters,” said Allen.

In addition to the headquarters commanding and controlling its subordinate units, it also must provide operational capabilities, such as deployable communications suites,

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coordination elements, and a nuclear disablement team. Equipment is vital for those capabilities.

The deployable communications suites are used to link the operators in the field with the technical expertise. That expertise may be resident at the home installation, at a university or laboratory, or at another government agency. The communications capability provided by the headquarters ensures expert advice and information gets to where it is needed.

"It's vital that we continue to recruit and maintain a staff of highly motivated, top performing, information technology, and telecommunications professionals capable of performing under pressure and in high visibility situations," said Ty Bledsoe, chief of the Operational Services Division, G6. "It's also important to ensure we have state-of-the-art technology that makes the most efficient use of bandwidth."

The coordination elements deploy as required to synchronize and manage CBRNE technical assistance in support of combatant commanders, joint task force commanders, and managers and directors from lead federal agencies.

"Training in preparation for possible overseas operations, major field exercises, and participation in national special security events offer opportunities for the command to provide CBRNE planning assistance, subject matter expertise, and hazard prediction modeling in a variety of scenarios," said Maj. Steven Crusinberry, officer in charge of the CBRNE Coordination Element Section. "These are examples of the services the

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command could be asked to provide to supported staffs in the First and Fifth Continental U.S. Armies, Northern Command, or other combatant commands."

Once the personnel and equipment were on hand, training became a priority. A variety of training exercises for the operational elements and the deployable headquarters were scheduled.

"Transferring the institutional knowledge of the relatively small Chemical-Biological Rapid Response Team to a rapidly expanding CBRNE coordination element, while transitioning from the U.S. Army Materiel Command to U.S. Army Forces Command was quite a challenge," said Lt. Col. William Schaff, the deputy chief of staff for plans, training and operations.

"Assuming command and control of multiple subordinate units, while supporting the Global War on Terrorism and maintaining current and new operations was another hurdle to jump. Teamwork and understanding that the paradigm must change were critical to success," he added.

Meeting with already established partner organizations, documenting new partnerships, and ensuring everyone understands how all the pieces fit together in a CBRNE-related event, is a priority for the coordination element. "Building a team not just with the 20th Support Command (CBRNE) but throughout the Department of Defense, industry, and academia will one day prove to be our key to success," said Schaff.

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These are just a few of the tasks the headquarters needed to perform to get the command to full operational capability. Supporting and monitoring some very busy subordinate units is often a full time job by itself.

"It would have been relatively easy to get caught up in day-to-day operations and forget about movement toward full operational capability," Schaff commented.

"However with teamwork and the leadership's vision we continued to progress each week, moving through a crawl-walk-run process," he explained.

The 52d Ordnance Group (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) and the 22d Chemical Battalion (Technical Escort) are two subordinates of the 20th SUPCOM (CBRNE) that have continued to operate both in the homeland and overseas and remain prepared to respond to any chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, or explosive hazards.

"The last year of the war has been one of the most stressful in the history of Army EOD," said Col. Michael J. Davis, commander of the 52d Ordnance Group (EOD). "The group's Soldiers have carried the fight to the terrorist bomb makers and, at great sacrifice, saved countless lives."

"Thirteen of our Soldiers have been killed in the line of duty and over 100 have been wounded or injured," stated Command Sgt. Maj. James H. Clifford, the highest ranking non-commissioned officer in the 52d Ordnance Group (EOD).

"Soldiers of the 52d Ordnance Group (EOD) conduct missions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Kosovo to destroy hazardous weapons caches, unexploded ordnance and IEDs," Clifford explained.

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"Our Soldiers have destroyed more than 200,000 UXO items and rendered safe over 5,000 IEDs and vehicle-borne IEDs, in support of the global war on terrorism, Clifford said. "Those Soldiers not deployed in the war are engaged in homeland security missions which includes providing EOD support to military and civilian authorities. During 2004, Soldiers of the 52d Ordnance Group (EOD) conducted over 4,000 EOD missions in the continental U.S.," he said.

Soldiers for the 22d Chemical Battalion (Technical Escort) are also deployed to Iraq conducting sensitive site exploitations to gain intelligence and ensure terrorists do not employ chemical or biological weapons against coalition forces or the civilian population in Iraq. Additionally, Soldiers and civilians of the 22d continue to conduct emergency responses, disablement and elimination missions of old chemical munitions throughout the U.S., including Alaska and Hawaii.

"Over this past year the 22d Chemical Battalion has transformed from a stand-alone organization under Army Material Command to being an integral part of the 20th Support Command and FORSCOM," said Lt. Col. Patrick R. Terrell, commander of the 22d Chemical Battalion (TE). "We've done this without any interruption to our operational tempo and without any incidents," he said.

"Our great Soldiers and civilians continue rotations in Iraq and support throughout the United States. Every day they impress me with their professionalism and dedication," Terrell said.

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The Army has recognized the need for more CBRNE response units like these.

The 71st Ordnance Group (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) and the 110th Chemical Battalion (Technical Escort) will both be activated in the fall of 2005. They will provide additional capabilities to meet the ever-increasing demands for CBRNE expertise to support the Global War on Terrorism and requirements in the homeland.

"Under the 20th SUPCOM (CBRNE) we've already grown one additional EOD battalion headquarters and just in time for the command's first birthday, we'll have another EOD group headquarters," said Col. Davis.

While it was anticipated that this one-star headquarters would continue to grow and change, no one was expecting the early changeover of the command group. After less than 12 months in a two-year command, Brig. Gen. Walt Davis was selected to command the Joint Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Center of Excellence at Creech Air Force Base, Nev. Just prior to his leaving, a new Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff replaced the retiring incumbents.

According to some, the leadership is what has helped the headquarters come to full operational capability in only one year.

"The leadership has really allowed the staff sections a lot of freedom to flesh out their own operations and focus their efforts where needed to meet the commander's intent," said Capt. Tony Dubay, an operations officer with the coordination section of the command. "This latitude allowed my section to determine the implied tasks of our

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mission, train, integrate with our partners, and begin executing our mission with a very high degree of success within a short time,” he said.

“We have a great group of people here at the headquarters, all great Americans, who have worked hard over the last year to get this command ready to be what the Army needs for management of CBRNE operations,” said Brig. Gen. Walt Davis, the first commander of the unit.

The 20th Support Command (CBRNE) will continue transforming, adding additional companies, battalions, and other subordinate units through at least 2012.

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